

July 27, 2006

To: Members of the Three-Tier Review Task Force

I recently learned of the Washington state three-tier system review. I have been reading about this process in an effort to educate myself, so I have a very basic understanding of the current situation.

As a previous school Student Assistance Counselor and now a coordinator of the Washington State Student Assistance Prevention-Intervention Services Program at Educational Service District 105, I feel this is an important issue and there are many facts to consider as this review is taking place. Decisions made have a potential to have far ranging effects in several areas, both on the humanistic side of things and the economical side of things. As you gather and evaluate information, I ask you to consider the following data when making your recommendations.

Tragic health, social and economic problems result from youths' consumption of alcohol, by far the most widely used drug by that age group in our society. Underage drinking is a causal factor in a host of serious problems: homicide, suicide, traumatic injury, drowning, burns, violent and property crime, high risk sex, fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol poisoning, and the need for treatment for alcohol abuse and dependence. In 2001, the cost of underage drinking to the citizens of Washington alone was \$1.4 billion. Translated, that is \$2,432 per year for each youth in the state. (1)

In the 2004 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey, 30 day alcohol use is reported as follows:

GRADE	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Percent of students reporting use.	46.2%	32.6%	18%

New research coming out about adolescent brain functioning is very clear. Aaron White, an assistant research professor in the psychiatry department at Duke University and the co-author of a recent study of extreme drinking on college campuses reports, "There is no doubt about it now: There are long term cognitive consequences to excessive drinking of alcohol in adolescents... We definitely didn't know five or 10 years ago that alcohol affected the teen brain differently." (2) Teenage alcohol consumption is a big concern and was recently the focus of a nationwide campaign, with Town Hall meetings going on across the nation.

As I understand it, state policy around alcohol distribution has three goals:

- 1) Foster temperance/ promote moderation in consumption of alcohol
- 2) Assure controlled, responsible and orderly marketing of alcohol
- 3) Promote the efficient collection of taxes.

In essence, these laws impact the availability or lack of alcohol to adolescents among other things.

As you examine all issues connected to this review, please consider the impact of underage consumption of alcohol. As you consider recommendations, I would hope that any changes made will not negatively impact alcohol availability to minors.

Sincerely,

Cathy Kelley

- (1) *Underage Drinking Training Enforcement Center* Web site:  
<http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp#Top>
- (2) Butler, K. (2006, July 6). *Teen drinkers sap brainpower*. Seattle Post Intelligencer. p C3



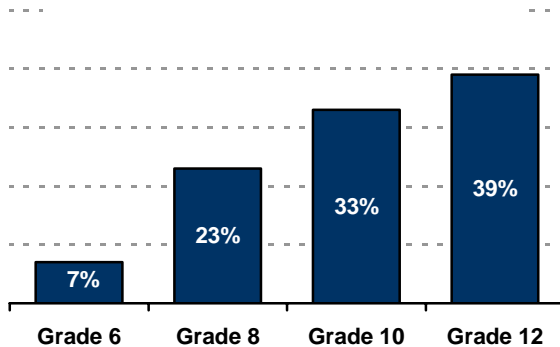
# Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking

## Community Facts for Yakima County

### Are *OUR* children using alcohol?

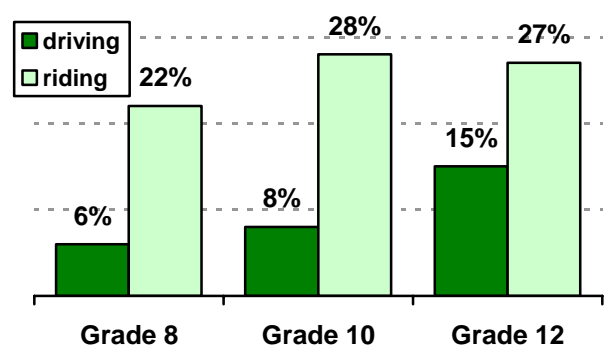
#### ...recently?

Percent of students who report having a drink in the past month



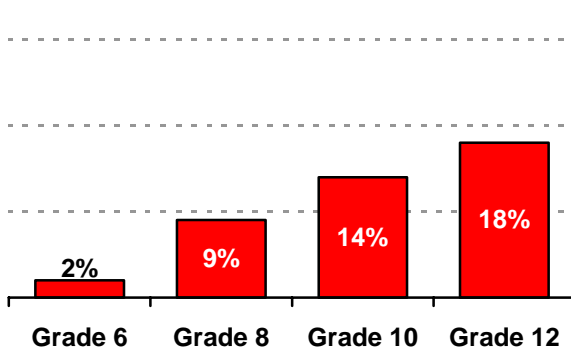
#### ...while driving?

Percent of students who report drinking and driving OR riding with a driver who had been drinking

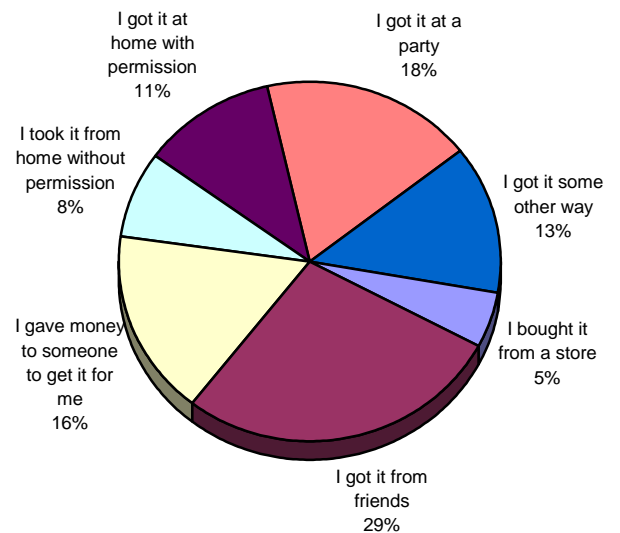


#### ...frequently?

Percent of students who report drinking on 3 or more days in the past month

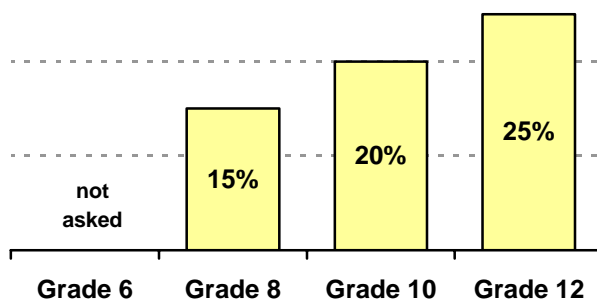


#### How do students who drank during the past month get their alcohol?



#### ...heavily?

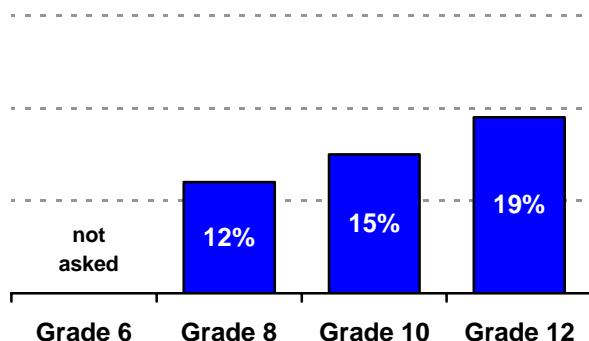
Percent of students who report drinking heavily (5 or more drinks in a row) at least once in the past two weeks



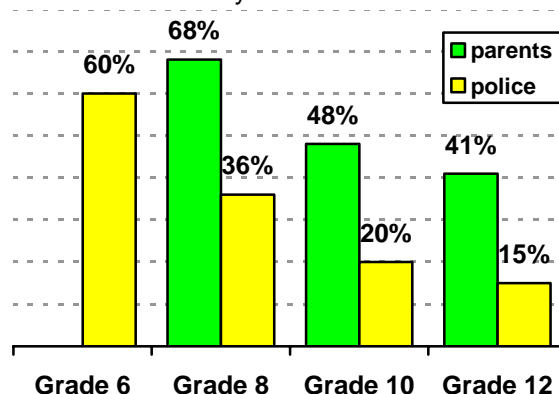
Survey results are generated from student responses to the statewide 2004 Healthy Youth Survey. To find out more about the Healthy Youth Survey, please visit <http://www3.doh.wa.gov/HYS>

## How strong are the barriers to drinking in our community?

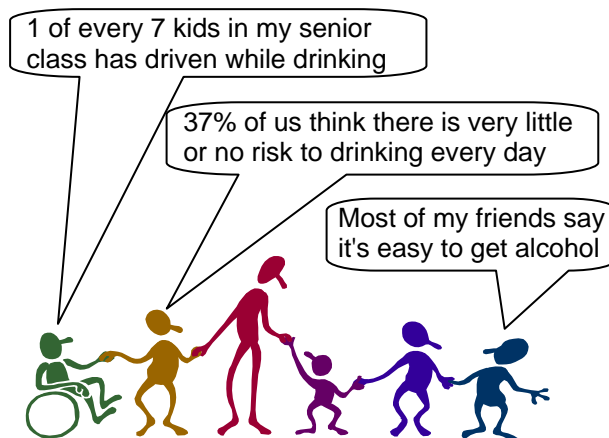
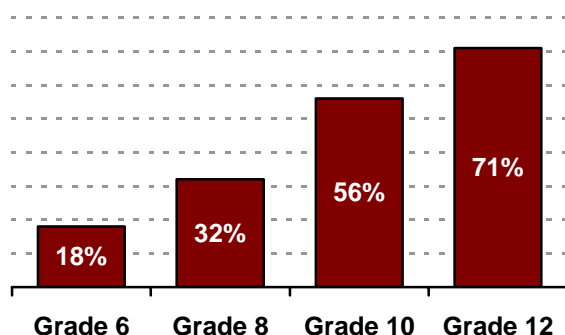
Percent of students who feel that their parents\* think it is only "a little bit wrong" or "not wrong at all" for their teen to drink alcohol regularly



Percent of students who think they will get caught by parents\* or police if they drink alcohol



Percent of students who think it is easy to get alcohol when they want



\*Questions about parental attitudes were included at the discretion of the school districts. Results may not reflect a representative sample of all students in the community.

## Is there real harm in underage drinking?

Alcohol use among youth is strongly correlated with:

- Violence
- Sexual activity
- School failure
- Illicit drug use
- Driving safety

*"What parents may not realize is that children say that parental disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink."*

Charles Curie, SAMHSA Administrator  
U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services



